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Title: Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues

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Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues

## **Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues**

**Abstract:** In this article I examine the applicability of James Procter's argument for a renewed concept of the 'postcolonial everyday' to the context of asylum. Procter states that postcolonial studies has typically preferred the extraordinary to the quotidian, viewing the everyday as only worth consideration when it is defamiliarised or invested with the exceptional. The 'everydayness of the everyday' is, he suggests, the real "'beyond" of diasporic multiculturalism'. Procter argues for a rehabilitation of Ato Quayson's sense of the everyday as an ethical imperative within postcolonial studies, as both an intellectual engagement and critical practice. However, without disputing Procter's prescience, it is evident that, regarding asylum, the incursion of a politics of the exception into daily life fundamentally problematizes this sense of the everyday. I argue that asylum seekers today are made, in effect, to incarnate the ban—the relation of inclusive exclusion that characterizes the politics of exception—and that this is realised in even the most prosaic details of daily life in the asylum system. Through a reading of Sonja Linden's Asylum Monologues (2006) and Asylum Dialogues (2008), and their surrounding contexts (especially the anti-removal protests on the Kingsway estate in Glasgow between 2006 and 2008), I address the extent to which Procter's sense of the 'taken-for-grantedness' in the postcolonial everyday can be mapped onto asylum experience, and suggest that the incursions of a politics of the exception into asylum seekers' everyday life necessitates a postcolonial response that can conjure even-handedly with the exception(al) and the quotidian without recourse to the defamiliarizing strategies that would cast the asylum seeker as irredeemably other.

**Key words:** everyday; postcolonial; asylum; exception; the ban; conviviality

There is a right to life in illegality.

Michel Agier (Agier 2008: 96)

As James Procter has argued, in an astute and timely essay in *New Formations*, 'the everyday tends to form the constitutive outside of postcolonial thinking' (Procter 2006: 62).

Postcolonial studies has tended to prefer the extraordinary to the quotidian, or to refer to the latter in terms of the former; and postcolonial theories of the everyday have typically drawn on French sociology to configure the everyday as a site of potential social transformation and re/constitution of the human (Lefebvre 1971 [1968]), or inherent resistance to power (De Certeau 1988 [1984]). Where in the past postcolonial studies has addressed the everyday it has done so, Procter argues, through the optic of recursive newness; thus, while he values Paul Gilroy's sense of conviviality as 'a spontaneous, sporadic and uneven formation', Procter considers the absence of an everyday application of conviviality in Gilroy's work as symptomatic of the tendency in postcolonial studies more generally to privilege accounts of

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the transgressive and the transgressed, which leaves the ‘taken-for-granted’ as exactly, and unproductively, that: the “‘beyond” of diasporic multicultural’ (Procter 2006: 72). In place of this emphasis on the redemptive potential within defamiliarisation, Procter argues for a necessary rehabilitation and rearticulation of Ato Quayson’s ‘sense of the everyday as an ethical imperative in postcolonial studies’, as both an intellectual engagement and critical practice (Procter, 2006: 63);<sup>1</sup> but without resorting again to deploying migrant experience as, in the words of Sukhdev Sandhu, shorthand ‘metaphors for newness’ (Sandhu 2004 [2003]: xviii).

Taking the example of British Asians, Procter presents the case for ‘Asianness, as an aspect of everyday English life, [...] to be allowed to become commonsense, or taken-for-granted’ in order to realize the full potential of the conviviality espoused by postcolonial thinkers such as Gilroy (Procter 2006: 78). This heuristic intervention into postcolonial diaspoetics is perhaps even more apposite in 2011 (60 years since the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) than it was when first published in 2006, as Leicester moves closer to becoming the UK’s first white minority city (predicted to be the case by 2020), and a recent Institute for Public Policy Research briefing paper on the influence of the British National Party reports that, contrary to a certain species of popular wisdom, high levels of immigration do not lead to an increase in far-right sympathies, but conversely, ‘direct contact with migrants dissuades people from supporting the BNP’ (Chappell et. al. 2010: 2). The ‘everydayness of everyday life’ (Procter 2006: 78) is thus a crucial aspect of good social relations; a politics of the quotidian rather than the politicisation of the quotidian. Yet in terms of asylum the incursion of a politics of the exception into the everyday fundamentally changes the terms of the argument (Farrier 2011). More than any other kind of immigrant today in the UK, asylum seekers are made to represent the sovereign nation’s capacity to control its borders, to in effect incarnate the border—living reminders of the outside, forced to perform a species of unbelonging that colludes in the fantasy of a ‘gestalt citizenship’. Michel Agier has written of the “‘spreading out” of borders until they become personalized’, and coincide in the person of the asylum seeker (Agier, 2009: 244). This convergence filters down to the everyday level, as successive acts of legislation have curtailed asylum seekers’ capacity to act as social reproducers: without the right to work, and for some living with the daily threat of removal, makes it near impossible to experience the everydayness of the everyday.

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The purpose of this article is not to contest Procter's argument or suggest it is somehow insufficient; he himself observes that it is meaningless to conceive of 'the postcolonial everyday' in general terms (Procter 2006: 65). It is, rather, to investigate, in the context of the inclusive exclusion of asylum seekers where, to paraphrase Keya Ganguly, 'the everyday is routinely catastrophic' (Ganguly 2002: 2), how the everyday can be engaged as an ethical imperative. I will examine Sonja Linden's Asylum Monologues (2006) and Asylum Dialogues (2008), and their surrounding contexts (especially the anti-removal protests on the Kingsway estate in Glasgow between 2006 and 2008), in order to address the extent to which Procter's sense of the 'taken-for-grantedness' in the postcolonial everyday can be mapped onto asylum experience. Through reading these texts which reproduce (in some senses, problematically) asylum seeker voices and contexts of resistance, I will suggest that the incursions of a politics of the exception (understood in the terms propounded by Carl Schmitt, and afterwards Giorgio Agamben)<sup>2</sup> into the everyday life of asylum seekers necessitates a postcolonial response that can conjure even-handedly with the exception(al) and the quotidian without recourse to the defamiliarizing strategies that would cast the asylum seeker as irredeemably other.

Certainly since the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, a politics of the exception has characterized the UK's response to asylum seekers. Étienne Balibar has described how the state's goal is to perpetuate rather than eradicate illegality through its policies of immigration control, thus justifying repressive security measures. Illegality is first produced by the state's refusal to welcome immigrants, which then capitalizes on the subsequent 'insecurity syndrome', consolidating its power base by reiterating the abject condition of the asylum seeker (Balibar 2004: 62). Although Balibar is referring specifically to French immigration, his point is equally illustrative of the UK. Thus the question of the politics of the quotidian is qualified by the designation of the asylum seeker as a figure of the exception. My understanding of the exception here is informed by the work of Giorgio Agamben, for whom the ban (an idea itself taken from Jean-Luc Nancy) describes a form of inclusive-exclusionary political relationship in which the subject is simultaneously abandoned and retained by the law: held within the purview of law's censure but excluded from its protection, they are 'exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, inside and outside, become indistinguishable' (Agamben 1998: 28. Emphasis in the original). The ban is the lived experience of the asylum seeker under the current legal provision in the UK, and this has Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues

clear, profound implications for their capacity to develop a sense of the everyday that is not impinged upon by sovereign exceptionality. As Irene Gedalof has observed, serial asylum legislation in the UK has in part been directed at restricting access to ‘the “stuff” of cultural production—food, housing, clothing, health care, education, family life’ (Gedalof 2007: 84). Asylum seekers are denied the right to work while their claim is being processed; they can be detained by the UK Border Agency where it is deemed administratively convenient, and where not detained are subject to compulsory dispersal around the UK; while accommodated by the government they are not permitted to provide hospitality to other asylum seekers; single adults are given welfare support of £35 per week (in the case of those whose claim is refused, provided they agree to be returned to their country of origin, this money is distributed in the form of vouchers which are tied to the major supermarkets, making shopping in more affordable outlets such as markets impossible, as well as often precluding the opportunity to buy culturally-determined foodstuffs, such as Halal produce); all the while, they live with the uncertainty of not knowing whether or not they will be afforded sanctuary, and if refused, the daily threat of forced removal, placing a significant obstacle in the way of forming and investing in relationships with those they live alongside. In these, and many other respects, the asylum seeker is excluded from the everyday and made into the citizen’s ‘dark other’.

Sonja Linden is the author of a number of dramatic works (including I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Woman from Rwanda (2003), Crocodiles Seeking Refuge (2005) and Welcome to Ramallah (2008)) that investigate how, for many people today, life is a precarious business. During her time as writer in residence for the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (1997-2004), Linden set up a London-based testimonial writing programme, Write to Life, which enables torture victims to find creative release by writing about their experiences. In turn, this led Linden to found the iceandfire theatre company in 2003, with a remit to explore human rights issues through performance and partnership with campaigning groups and local communities. In 2006, iceandfire set up Actors for Human Rights, a network of professional actors, as an outreach activity to promote discussion of human rights issues through testimony-based dramatic performance. This included Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues (hereafter, AM and AD), both scripted by Linden from the personal testimonies of people with experience of the UK’s asylum system, in keeping with the recent trend of ‘verbatim’ or ‘playback’ theatre, Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues

which privilege authenticity in the presentation of asylum narratives (Anderson and Wilkinson 2007; Dennis 2008). The danger with this kind of theatrical framing of testimony is widely acknowledged, most succinctly summarized in Julie Salverson's warning against the production of an 'aesthetics of injury' (Salverson 1999): an empathetic staging that, by representing the words of asylum seekers on stage through the voice of a non-asylum seeker actually colludes in the passive victimhood of the witnessing subject. In terms of AM and AD, both of which have an explicitly didactic function (in AD characters even refer on several occasions to the 'conversion' of British people who previously were suspicious or hostile to asylum seekers), the re-framing of testimony is not therefore unproblematic—the point at which performance becomes what Mieke Bal has called 'expository discourse', where the combination of an authoritative agent and an exhibition of evidence collude to overwhelm the scruples of an audience, is therefore of crucial import (Bal 1996: 166).

Both AM and AD cast the original asylum s(p)eakers in a passive role, as people who need to have 'voice' given to them by others. However, while mindful of the difficulties this creates, I nonetheless think that both plays make significant contributions to the application of Procter's everyday ethics to asylum contexts. The problems of framing are to an extent ameliorated by the self-consciousness with which each play addresses the presentation of asylum seeker testimony. AM features a rolling cast of ethnically non-specified actors performing the testimony of three African asylum seekers; in AD, the meta-theatrical setting of a rehearsal for a performance of the play, creates a sense of provisionality, of working something through, that precludes an over-dominating sense of expository discourse. As Salverson has observed, the goal for witnessing performances is fundamentally relational (Salverson 2008: 246). I contend that both plays—through the rolling cast of AM and the contextualisation of AD in the Kingsway anti-deportation protests in Glasgow in 2006—in fact dramatize the central tenet of Judith Butler's investigation of vulnerability in the contemporary climate of fear: that to say 'we', to invoke a sense of community that is the basis for the everyday as lived experience, is to posit 'ourselves outside ourselves' (Butler 2004: 25).

AM features the 'actual words' of three asylum seekers: Germaine, from eastern DRC; Olive, from Rwanda; and Marjorie, from Uganda (Linden 2006: 15). The casting directions for the play specify only the sex of the actors who should play each part; no effort

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is made to tie the performer in terms of age or, crucially, ethnicity. AM is the flagship production of Actors for Human Rights, and has toured the UK using a rolling cast of performers; its adaptability, to be produced anywhere with a flexible cast and minimal expense, is key to its efficacy as a medium of debate.<sup>3</sup> It also, however, situates the play at the nexus of the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the postcolonial everyday and the incursion of exceptionality in asylum discourse. When I saw AM performed in Leicester in 2009, it featured three non-African actors; the effect on the subjectivity of the audience and performers was profound. Rather than simply compound (in however well-meaning a fashion) the condition of voicelessness to which most asylum seekers are subjected, the ethnically non-specific cast created a sense of deliberate and multi-directional incommensurability which productively unsettled racialological (in Gilroy’s sense) assumptions about the link between displacement and ethnicity or cultural background, the implicit corollary of what Gilroy calls the ‘peculiar synonymy of “white” and “European”’ (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 155). As has been variously observed in recent years, the rise of xenoracism has shifted the focus of skin-based prejudice; yet as Steve Garner has remarked, the ‘culture-coding’ praxis of ethno-racism (the practice of using culture as an oblique way to apply raciological norms) is replicated by the re-emergence of the colour line in asylum discourse (Garner 2007: 164, 151).<sup>4</sup> The non-specific casting of AM speaks directly to this context, and the effect is to undermine the racialized presentation of asylum in much contemporary discourse.<sup>5</sup>

In AM, the performers undergo a form of disarticulation of body and voice that throws into question the divisions that describe who can be seen and heard, and with them the entire heritage of asylum as a post-war concept; by having white, European actors voice the accounts of African asylum seekers, the play recalls the origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention in the disorder of post-WWII Europe. In fact it refers to this concept directly; in the middle section of the play, the actors step out of character to recount a polyvocal history of global displacement, and efforts to restrict the definition of ‘the refugee’ in the latter half of the twentieth-century: one actor observes that,

The Refugee Convention never envisaged this continuing exodus from civil wars and genocides breaking out in places we knew nothing about, or the arrival on our shores of thousands of traumatized, desperate people who were not white middle class

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Europeans speaking English, but who still needed the protection of the Refugee Convention (Linden 2006: 7-8).

The 1951 Convention remains the foundation of international refugee law, expanded in its geographical and temporal application by the 1967 Protocol. This historical fact is occluded, however, by the contemporary racialized presentation of displacement as a problem inherent to and emanating from the global South. By reminding white British audiences of the original application of the 1951 Convention to, in many cases, people that looked like themselves, AM offers an instance of the vulnerability which Butler proposes as a passage out of cycles of historical violence. Butler asserts that we are all ‘constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies’—vulnerable to ‘a sudden address from elsewhere that we cannot pre-empt’ or will away (Butler 2004: 20, 29). To be vulnerable before the address of another is a consequence of the fact that dispossession is at the heart and origin of community, that we are ‘[g]iven over from the start to the world of others’ (Butler 2004: 26). By dramatizing the conjunction of the citizen’s body and the asylum seeker’s words, AM supplants the forms of racialized ‘taken-for-grantedness’ which perpetuate the ban as the lived experience of asylum seekers (that it is possible to determine whether or not a person is a full, partial or non-citizen on the basis of their body), with a far more productive ‘taken-for-grantedness’ that looks beyond the dislocation of body and voice and is closer by far to Procter’s everyday ethics.

One of the most marked effects of watching AM is the development of a kind of dual awareness, one that both cannot ignore the dislocation of the actor’s body and the testimony they are performing, but which simultaneously looks beyond the self-conscious failure of the cast to mimetically reproduce the presences of Germaine, Olive and Marjorie, to an appreciation of common vulnerability that is, as Butler says, ‘one of the most important resources from which we must take our bearings and find our way’ (Butler 2004: 30). Butler’s association of vulnerability and community acknowledges that community is an affective concept; but whereas frequently the community’s response to immigrants is driven by negative factors—what Sara Ahmed calls an ‘affective economy’ of hate (Ahmed 2004: 119), or Zygmunt Bauman, the ‘spectre of social degradation’ (Bauman 2007: 15)—I suggest that this vulnerability is expressed in AM as shame: not in the form of an accusation, but a collective sensibility of the indignities of the current asylum system that is dramatized by the

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disarticulated bodies of the actors on stage. I follow here Elizabeth Probyn's description of shame within the everyday as 'the body's feeling of being out-of-place in the everyday'; shame, Probyn argues, is felt 'in the rupture when bodies cannot or will not fit the place—when, seemingly, there is no place to hide' (Probyn 2004: 328, 329). Probyn argues that, rather than inhibiting, shame is a productive concept for advancing a political project of everyday ethics precisely because it is 'located and embodied [...] in a response to others' (Probyn 2004: 328). In this rupture—vividly enacted on stage in AM—is the exposure of the citizen subject to the suggestion that her/his 'taken-for-grantedness' in the everyday is provisional; that s/he is vulnerable, and furthermore that this vulnerability is a condition of the everyday. This formulation turns on its head the configuration of the asylum seeker as the citizen's dark other, by acknowledging and even embracing the anterior existence of otherness within the concept of 'home'.<sup>6</sup> The disarticulated bodies of the actors in AM simultaneously gesture towards the disaggregation of citizenship that produces the asylum seeker as the embodiment of exceptional politics, and towards Gilroy's vision of planetary humanism. Gilroy's 'pragmatic' vision of 'an abstract sense of a human similarity' built on an appreciation of common dignity and care, and bounded by the absence of race-consciousness (Gilroy 2000: 17), is the horizon to which the disarticulated bodies of the performers in AM are oriented, even while they inhabit a moment that falls far short of the ideal; thus, even as it self-consciously reproduces the strategies of defamiliarisation which Procter looks to move beyond, the rubric of shame in AM anticipates a politics of the 'taken-for-granted' within the everyday.

The staging of AD does not enact the same self-conscious unsettling of racial categories as AM. As its title suggests, AD replaces AM's tri-part monologues with a series of exchanges between asylum seekers and British citizens who have befriended them. The casting directions specify the ethnicity as well as sex of the actors, and as a result the play loses the sense of performative disaggregation evident in AM. AD is also more open to the accusations of silencing the voices it purports to be promoting, as the citizen befrienders introduce and even on occasion prompt the testimony of the asylum seekers. However, I suggest AD does describe a strategy for resisting and revising what Michael Billig has called 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995: 6), the habituation of power to local contexts. While it lacks the sense of rupture in the disarticulated staging of AM, the politics of the quotidian in AD nonetheless advance a form of everyday ethics, by modelling the 'healthier patterns' of Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues

relationship which Gilroy predicts will emerge from ‘everyday encounters with difference’ (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 108). As such it describes what I believe is, in terms of a postcolonial response to the problems of asylum, a necessary departure from Procter’s excellent and finely calibrated argument; that is, an ethical re-valuing of the everyday in the form of what Gilroy calls a demotic or disloyal cosmopolitanism.

Procter is right to point out that, ultimately, Gilroy’s analysis in After Empire recoups ‘a certain distance from everyday conviviality’ (Procter 2006: 72) in calling for a cosmopolitan commitment (if we bear in mind Bauman’s warning that cosmopolitanism can become ‘a community-free zone’ (Bauman 2001: 57)). In fact, at points AD seems to operate with a concept of the everyday that resembles the defamiliarizing strategies Procter wishes to leave behind: in describing his first meetings with Angela, a Jamaican asylum seeker, John, a British man who befriends her, explains: ‘[I] was one of the many who said, “Send them all home, it’s an English country, they shouldn’t be here taking all our money.” Then this damned woman Angela turns up to clean my office and turns the world upside down!’ (Linden 2008: 2).<sup>7</sup> The suggestion that John’s everyday working environment is (however welcome this may be) profoundly unsettled by Angela only really gives a positive spin on the representation of the asylum seeker as a figure of the exception(al). In this sense AD seems to preclude, in a strict sense, Procter’s understanding of ‘taken-for-grantedness’.

Despite these qualifications, I believe AD does present both a possible application for Gilroy’s demotic cosmopolitanism as a politics of the quotidian, and a proximity to Procter’s argument that is necessarily qualified by the particular convergence of the exception and the everyday in the lives of asylum seekers. For Gilroy, the contemporary challenge of multiculturalism is to contest the stadial, hierarchical organisation of imperial raciology. It is the function of what he calls ‘demotic cosmopolitanism’ to go beyond issues of tolerance, into ‘a more active engagement with the irreducible value of diversity within sameness’, via an articulation of ‘cosmopolitan hope from below’ that emerges in quotidian transactions: reading in the tracks of mundane encounters and everyday virtues (‘looking, listening, discretion, friendship’) an ethical sense of ‘everyday everydayness’ (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 74-75). For example, the play dramatizes the use of judicial review as a form of disloyalty to the homogenizing dictates of the nation-state. We are told of how, in an effort to halt Angela’s removal, John calls a friend, Ross, to help submit her application for judicial review. The

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papers need to be processed at the High Court in London, but they and John are in the West Midlands. The conversation with Ross reveals how John's disloyal cosmopolitanism, rather than revising the everyday in defamiliarized or exceptional terms, is rooted in the everyday:

John

I've gotta get some documents from a solicitor in London to the High Court, I can't give you all the details now but literally, it's a person's life that is banking on this.

Ross

Where's the solicitor?

John

Hampstead.

Ross

I'm in Hampstead now! Where in Hampstead?

John

Downshire Hill. And he says (laughing)—

Ross

I can just see the end of the street from here, I'll be there in two minutes (Linden 2008: 11).

The sense of the everyday deployed here is perhaps closer to that of Lefebvre than De Certeau: emphasizing the multiplicity of the everyday rather than an inherent quality of resistance. It depicts a scene of the kind Gilroy describes in After Empire, in which, exposure to racial difference 'is not ethnic jeopardy but rather an unremarkable principle of metropolitan life' (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 105). John and Ross's cosmopolitan disloyalty—a rejection of the production of asylum seekers as 'the populist limit against which evasive national particularity can be seen, felt, measured, and then, if need be, negatively discharged' (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 135)—is presented as occurring within the kind of ordinary

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coincidence that characterizes everyday life. The ‘everydayness’ is not made strange, yet the ethical imperatives that emerge within everyday encounters are nonetheless highlighted.

This moment in AD describes why, I believe, a complete ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the kind Procter describes is unsuited (at present) to the context of asylum. The perpetuation of figures of the exception in asylum discourse necessitates a response that is equally fluent in the sense of provisionality which the exception promotes. This is evident in the way AD depicts the use of judicial review as a form of cosmopolitan disloyalty. Vikki Squire has observed how the Home Office has employed on occasion a measure of indistinction in reference to asylum seekers and the judiciary as complementary forms of threat, where its intention to remove or refuse asylum has been contested. Referring to an unsuccessful appeal, in 2006, against the indefinite temporary leave afforded to the nine Afghan men who claimed asylum by hijacking an internal flight in Afghanistan in 2001, and forcing it to fly instead to Stansted, the then-Home Secretary John Reid commented, “The court has ruled that it is not open to me to deny leave to enter the United Kingdom to the Afghan hijackers, or people like them, whose presence we regard as undesirable.”<sup>8</sup> As Squire has said, Reid’s comments establish ‘an exclusionary relation of equivalence’ between conflated forms of threat (Squire 2009: 73), whether these are external (the interchangeable hijackers and undesirables, i.e. asylum seekers) or internal (the judiciary). Reid’s implied synonymy between asylum seekers and terrorists, and the judiciary, demonstrates the application of a politics of the exception to asylum contexts, conflating the distinction between proposed internal and external forms of threat under the rubric of the ban. In contrast to this, AD describes judicial review as a source of cosmopolitan disloyalty, of resisting the threshold of indistinction which characterizes the ban and which Reid’s criticism of the judiciary invoked. As noted above, AD is framed by the meta-theatrical device of an audition or rehearsal for the play. At the start John remarks that, ‘if this makes it to the stage, I hope you’re going to typecast me, and you’ll get Colin Firth to play my part’ (Linden 2008: 2). This creates a sense of provisionality about the entire performance: everything on stage is part of a process of working through the implications of the stories of Angela, Mike and Mary, and their friends, which taken as a whole contests the provisionality imposed by the ban. Thus while it doesn’t conjure the same sense of productive ‘taken-for-grantedness’ as the disarticulated staging of AM, then, AD does realize the possibility of other ways of encountering asylum seekers that is rooted in lived experience.

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One of the main contexts for AD is the anti-removal protests that took place on the Kingsway estate in Glasgow between 2006 and 2008. Galvanized by the forced removal, in a dawn raid, of an asylum seeker and her two children on the 2 October 2006 (during which the children were separated from their mother for the duration of a 40 minute journey in caged vans to Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre), 130 Kingsway residents assembled on the estate at 5.30am the following morning to peacefully protest at the forced removal of their neighbours, and successfully deterred immigration officials from removing another family. The local community subsequently organized daily dawn patrols who would alert a network of protesters to mobilize if a forced removal was taking place. In all, the dawn patrols took place for two years.

Kingsway is situated in a deprived area to the West of Glasgow, and has since 2000 received high numbers of asylum seekers into the community through the compulsory dispersal system. Such a mix is conventionally thought to be highly combustible (indeed, there have been several instances of racial violence between locals and asylum seekers in Glasgow, including the murders of Firsat Dag in 2001 and Wei Wang in 2006, both in the Sighthill estate). However, bearing out the findings of the IPPR report on the roots of BNP support, Robina Qureshi of the Glasgow-based refugee organisation Positive Action for Housing has observed that as locals and asylum seekers began to interact in Kingsway, ‘something remarkable happened. They stood together at bus stops, and their kids sat side by side at school. They played—and fought—together. Before people knew it, locals and asylum seekers were in and out of each other’s homes’ (Qureshi 2007). Pierre Mayol has observed how in ‘the neighbourhood’ the divisions between public and private space become indistinct: the neighbourhood is the ‘middle term [...] between an inside and an outside’ (De Certeau et. al. 1998: 11). The function of the dawn raids was to impose the rule of the exception on the everyday—to, in effect, exploit the threshold, incipient character of the neighbourhood and make it, in places like Kingsway, operate according to the rule of the ban (where inside and outside become indistinguishable). Mayol also, however, observes that neighbourhoods are spaces of relationship, recognition, and ‘passage by the other’ (De Certeau et. al. 1998: 12-13. My emphasis), and it is in this sense that the Kingsway protesters revised the terms of the ban to inaugurate and indeed celebrate the vulnerability Butler espouses: not abandoned on the threshold of inside and outside, but actively negotiating it—‘in and out of each other’s homes’.

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At one point in the play, during the account of Mary, a Ugandan asylum seeker with four children, she describes how a dawn raid to remove her and her family is frustrated by the intervention of her neighbour, Linda, and the dawn patrols. The account provides a moment of comedy, as Linda initially thinks that the immigration officials are looking for her and panics about the whereabouts of her passport; yet behind the element of farce is a re-imagining of the everyday that works against the stultifying effects of banal nationalism. The Kingsway protests bear witness to Saskia Sassen's observation that 'the global is partly endogenous to the national rather than a formation that stands outside and in opposition to [it]' (Sassen 2008: 82). The anti-removal protestors like Linda are, despite their localisation and immobility, global actors of the kind Sassen describes; their actions, in expressing an endogenized sense of 'the outside', revise the terms of the ban. The neighbourhood is reclaimed as a threshold space that can freely accommodate the passage of the other. This does not, however, lead to a re-assertion of the everyday in the defamiliarizing terms which Procter advises postcolonial studies should move beyond. Rather, it is part of a new calculus of sameness and difference in which, as Gilroy says, 'the strangeness of strangers goes out of focus and other dimensions of a basic sameness can be acknowledged and made significant' (Gilroy 2006 [2004]: 3).

Linden's plays demonstrate that, while the necessity of engaging with the incursion of a politics of the exception into the everyday lives of asylum seekers forecloses to some extent the 'taken-for-grantedness' which Procter espouses, nonetheless it is possible to develop strategies of representing asylum experience that gesture beyond the old postcolonial tendency to defamiliarize the everyday in order to make it a fit site for politics. Here, 'taken-for-grantedness' encapsulates a more provisional category, more akin to the common vulnerability described by Butler, and Gilroy's new calculus of sameness and difference. While AM dramatizes the fallacy of a sense of gestalt citizenship through the disarticulation of the body of the citizen actor and the voice of the absent asylum s(p)eaker, AD demonstrates the emergence of the healthier patterns of encounter with difference in the everyday which Gilroy describes. In engaging with the exception within the everyday in this manner, both plays do, in different ways, address the demands of Procter's everyday postcolonialism: moving beyond an intellectual unsettling, to engage with a politics of the quotidian characterized by the everydayness of everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Procter regrets that Quayson does not develop 'a more sustained account of what everyday life itself might represent', resorting rather to the sort of critical acts of defamiliarization Procter seeks to move beyond, he is motivated by the latter's sense of the centrality of the everyday in an ethical 'postcolonializing practice' (Procter: 2006, 64, 63). It is notable that Quayson's argument, a critique of the defamiliarizing of the everyday in work by Theodor Adorno, Achille Mbembe and Homi Bhabha, reads all three not to advance the quotidian as a subject of postcolonial enquiry *per se*, but as test cases for 'whether interdisciplinarity offers or forecloses possibilities for defining an engaged attitude to the world of postcolonial relations outside the academy to which postcolonial studies so persistently gesture.' (Quayson, 2000: 26). The everyday, then, as the ground of Quayson's investigation, here is the 'taken for granted'; Procter's sense of the ethical imperative within the everyday is to scrutinise, with the same critical rigour, this sense of 'taken for grantedness' so as not to lose sight of the fact that 'postcoloniality' is experienced, for the majority, in quotidian rather than extraordinary terms. However, without recouping the defamiliarizing tendencies Procter criticizes, for my purposes it is also worth observing the significance of Quayson's emphasis on interdisciplinarity: that academic postcolonial studies discovers the ethical imperative within the everyday where it reaches beyond itself.

<sup>2</sup> Following Schmitt's dictum, 'sovereign is he who can decide on the state of exception' (Schmitt 1985 [1934]: 5), Agamben argues that sovereign power resides in wielding a capacity to define the difference between who or what is inside or outside the law within a threshold of indistinction. The exception is the manifestation of the relationship between life and law as a 'zone of undecideability' in which sovereign power is not diminished, but accentuated by undecideability (Agamben 2005: 2). It is worth observing that Zygmunt Bauman has called the asylum seeker, 'Derrida's "undecidable" made flesh' (Bauman 2007: 45).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://iceandfire.co.uk/outreach/scripts/asylum-monologues/>. Accessed 22 April 2010.

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<sup>4</sup> Garner observes that, “it is not surprising to find that in the early twenty-first century, in the long shadow of the Holocaust, where direct talk of racial inferiority is shocking, the sphere in which it is possible to talk openly about race is the cultural one.” (Garner, 2007: 163)

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Kenneally does something similar in *The Tyrant’s Novel* (2004), which narrates the circumstances that lead a writer in an unnamed Middle-Eastern country to flee to Australia but in which all the characters, including those located in the Middle-East and those in a detention centre in Australia, are given Anglo-Saxon names (Kenneally 2004).

<sup>6</sup> As Sara Ahmed has said, “[t]here is already strangeness and movement within the home itself” (Ahmed 2000: 87-88).

<sup>7</sup> This line featured prominently in promotional material for the play.

<sup>8</sup> The hijacking took place in February 2000. All nine were fleeing persecution as members of the Young Intellectuals group opposed by the Taliban. They were convicted of hijacking offences in December 2001. In a manner wholly characteristic of political rhetoric about asylum in the early and middle years of the decade the nine came to represent the conflation of ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘terrorist’ as synonymous forms of threatening outsider. They were also at the centre of a tussle between the courts and the Home Office to describe the men as deserving recipients of sanctuary or as an enemy threat. Their convictions were overturned in 2003, by the Court of Appeal, on the basis that they had acted under duress. Two years later they were awarded temporary admission to the UK. In 2006 the High Court ruled that their indefinite temporary leave to remain was unlawful, and awarded them discretionary leave to remain subject to a six-month rolling review. Reid’s unsuccessful appeal against this made him the fourth Home Secretary to fail to remove the men. (Sturke 2006).